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Abstract of the national paper of Australia

1. Australia's national paper will highlight Australia's unique advantage as a space industry location and, therefore, Australia's potential as a key player in space industry developments. Australia acknowledges that, in recent years, its profile on the international stage has declined with respect to space issues, but Australia's presence at the Third United Nations Conference on the Exploration and Peaceful Uses of Outer Space (UNISPACE III) is a demonstration of its renewed commitment to that pivotal area of global interconnection and sustainable growth.

2. Australia endorses the cooperative approach that now underpins, and must underpin, all future outer space activities. The competition that bedevilled space activities in the period of the first 20 years of space exploration has given way to working together—as epitomized by the Mir project and the work towards the development of the International Space Station. The intergovernmental agreement that Australia is developing with the Russian Federation is a further tangible example of international space cooperation.

3. The theme for the Conference, "Space Benefits for Humanity in the Twenty-first Century", says it all. Space technology has much to offer for the protection of the environment in which we, and more critically our descendants, live. Scientific knowledge of the Earth and its environment and the development of remote sensing capabilities in the field of weather forecasting, disaster management and the management of the Earth's resources are becoming critically important to improving the human condition. In the area of Asia and the Pacific, where Australia is located, weather patterns are volatile and natural disasters recurrent.

4. One of the important recommendations of the regional preparatory conference on UNISPACE III for Asia and the Pacific, which took place in Kuala Lumpur in May 1998, was that there was a need to increase the awareness of policy and decision makers about the huge potential of space remote sensing and related technologies for the effective management of resources and the environment, including disaster prediction, and mitigation of such events as forest fires, floods, droughts and earthquakes. Satellites increasingly provide important information for early warning and management of the effect of those disasters as well as information that is useful in the management of agriculture, forestry, minerals, water resources and fisheries.

5. By facilitating and utilizing communications, and improving and using position location capabilities, space technology has made the global village and information age a reality for humankind. Research, education and training in space science and technology and their linkage to information technology will be keys to the future for our youth. The regional preparatory conference in Kuala Lumpur concluded that for the Asia-Pacific region in general, and its island nations in particular, satellite communications were of paramount importance. Rural telecommunications, rural education, distance learning, tele-medicine and mastering of

appropriate technologies for those services are concrete examples of maximizing the exploitation of satellite capabilities for human benefit.

6. Significantly, the spin-offs and commercial benefits from space activities are becoming more widely recognized and this is a theme Australia would like to see developed and pursued at UNISPACE III. Space is no longer a government-only issue. Although global competition has been replaced by cooperation as the driver of progress in space, this is not to say that, at the commercial level, competition does not exist. It does—more than ever—and it is a positive sign for the future of the peaceful uses of outer space.

7. It is heartening in that regard that UNISPACE III is the first United Nations global conference in which industry and all elements of civil society are participating as full partners. The global space industry has become one of the largest industries in the world with, in 1996, an estimated $77 billion in revenues and more than 800,000 people employed worldwide, in infrastructure, telecommunications, applications and support services. The bulk of this is made up of services, which together with the ground and user segments may represent more than 10 times the value of spacecraft and launches. It is expected that over the next five years, the commercial market will overtake Governments as the largest customer of the space industry.

8. This trend is driven by the totally private financing of radically new telecommunications systems such as mobile systems based on low-Earth orbit and middle-Earth orbit satellite constellations. The demand for satellite services has in turn driven the launch service market. The commercial market between 1987 and 1996 amounted to 36 satellites launched on average each year. With a projected 1,697 satellites to be launched during the period 1998-2007, the commercial launch vehicle industry is forecast to expand at more than 10 per cent annually. Science, technology and the market place are now inextricably linked in the innovation process.

9. Australia is being seen increasingly as having competitive advantages for the world aerospace industry. This is because Australia has:

(a) An ideal location in the Asia-Pacific region, including proximity to the Equator for geostationary launches;

(b) Extensive low-population land areas;

(c) A benign climate;

(d) A well developed and sophisticated infrastructure;

(e) A very stable economy and political environment;

(f) A well educated, adaptable and technically proficient workforce;

(g) Respected non-proliferation credentials that facilitate access to critical technologies;

(h) Legislative support for launches in accordance with international treaties.

10. This last point is of crucial importance and Australia's national paper will set out what Australia has recently done in that area. The Space Activities Act of 1998 provides a framework for the conduct of commercial space activities, licensing of such activities and, at the same time, ensuring that Australia meets its international obligations. The Act establishes and apportions liability for any damage caused by Australian launch activities, establishes a system for licensing Australian space launch operations, provides for recovery operations and accident investigation procedures and determines the payment of launch licensing fees that are consistent with Australia's domestic requirements.

11. Although Australia's unlimited liability and obligations under international law remain, the legislation allows the Commonwealth Government of Australia to transfer most of the

financial risks associated with space launch activities to commercial participants. Prospective international investors had advised that, while Australia had the appropriate political and geographical climate for space launches, the lack of a clear regulatory system had acted as a disincentive to further activity. The Space Activities Act of 1998, and the regulations that are currently being drafted, have now addressed those concerns.

12. The Space Licensing and Safety Office, which was established under that legislation, is now the main point of contact for launch operators on such issues as licensing of space activities, determining the level of third-party insurance and issuing launch permits. Over the next few years there are some very exciting developments planned for launch facilities in Australia and Australia's national paper will emphasize why satellite users should consider Australia—first—as a launch site.

13. Australia sees this United Nations global conference—UNISPACE III—as a seminal one in the redirection of space activities from that of competition to that of cooperation and from government command and control to commercialization. Australia also sees the Conference, through the adoption of the Vienna Declaration on Space and Human Development at its conclusion, as bringing to the general public a new perspective on the challenges and benefits of space. Australia's national paper will signal Australia's intention, determination and capabilities of being a player in the global space arena.